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ABSTRACT

Designed to provide background information and assistance to educators developing arson prevention programs in the schools, this report reviews existing programs and recent research on juvenile firesetting. Following an introduction, information is divided into four sections. Section 1 emphasizes curiosity and emotional disturbances as underlying causes of juvenile arson and summarizes psychological research on the subject. Section 2 outlines the following firesetting motivations: vandalism, revenge, spite, jealousy, crime concealment, intimidation, and profit. Section 3 provides guidelines for developing effective prevention programs while section 4 surveys the growing problem of school-based arson. Lists of useful organizational resources and print materials conclude the report. (LP)

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Juvenile Firesetter
AND SCHOOL ARSON PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Clifford L. Karchmer/Battelle Memorial Institute
Law and Justice Study Center/Washington, D.C.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clifford L. Karchmer is a Research Scientist with the Battelle Law and Justice Study Center, located in their Washington, D.C. office. He directs Battelle's arson prevention and control programs, and since 1978 Mr. Karchmer has assisted Aetna in developing its national anti-arson public service campaign.

Mr. Karchmer has served in a number of criminal justice research, policy analysis, and program development positions, starting in 1969 as a Special Agent and Research Director for the Pennsylvania Crime Commission. Later, he was the Police and Crimes Specialist for the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice, and Director of the Massachusetts Organized Crime Control Council. At Battelle, he served as Operations Director for the National Center on White-Collar Crime—a special technical assistance program created by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Mr. Karchmer has served as Project Director for development of the model two-volume arson investigation handbook, Approaches for Combatting Arson-for-Profit Schemes, prepared for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, and The Government Executive's Guide to Arson Prevention and Control, produced for the U.S. Fire Administration. His articles on arson and other crime control subjects have appeared in the New York Times, Police Chief, Assets Protection Magazine, and the Journal of Insurance.

Mr. Karchmer received his undergraduate degree from Princeton University, and masters degree from the University of Wisconsin and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Currently, he is Adjunct Professor of Criminal Justice at The American University, Washington, D.C.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have grown more aware of juvenile involvement in firesetting incidents because fire service personnel, parents, mental health professionals, and others have recognized the need for better remedies to correct such behavior. This awareness is also a product of the recent sharp rise in juvenile firesetting incidents throughout the country. According to arrest and incident statistics, juvenile firesetters are responsible for an enormous share of the nationwide arson problem. Statistics reported by the FBI indicate that almost half of all arson arrestees are juveniles and that another large proportion of juvenile firesetters are handled by means other than arrest because of their age or the presence of a psychological disturbance for which a non-criminal justice remedy is deemed to be more appropriate.

Statistics suggest that almost half of arson arrestees are juveniles.

It is difficult to pinpoint hard and fast reasons for the nationwide increase in juvenile firesetting. Much of the phenomenon appears to be due to growth in the types of personal and family problems which are traditionally associated with increases in juvenile firesetting behavior. While this increase has been puzzling to many fire service experts, there is nevertheless a common thread running through juvenile firesetting phenomena. This common element is the use of fire to strike back at some*one* or some*thing*—such as a parent or institution—which the firesetter holds responsible for a personal hardship, emotional loss, severe punishment, or similar type of setback.

These intense feelings—which often run parallel to the emotions influencing adult revenge arsonists—present an increasingly serious problem to parents who discover their children's firesetting at home, as well as to school administrators concerned with increases in school-based arson. As with family-related firesetting, the youth who sets a school fire wields arson as a weapon for settling a score—for getting even with a teacher or principal or with the school itself.

Through creative planning and skillful coordination, many communities across the nation have developed effective programs to address their juvenile firesetting problems—often within the budgetary constraints that have become realities in most communities. These proven and highly promising efforts, which are profiled later in this publication, boast impressive success rates in the form of non-recurring firesetting incidents. The noteworthy programs have achieved success rates (expressed in terms of non-recurring firesetting behavior) ranging from ninety to one hundred percent drops in recidivism. These impressive results rank among the highest of any intervention programs designed to deal with juvenile antisocial or delinquent behavior.

School-based arson prevention programs, which offer mixtures of personal counseling and target hardening strategies, have drastically reduced incendiary fires in educational institutions—in

certain cases by as much as fifty percent in the first pilot year. In populous school districts, the amounts saved often total millions of dollars annually.

This report is designed to provide maximum information and assistance to the reader in developing programs for his or her locality. Each featured program is profiled by summarizing its prominent and distinguishing features which others should find important when addressing local needs and realities. To bring the reader as close as possible to recent progress in dealing with juvenile firesetting programs, a resource guide and bibliography of technical information (including current psychological and psychiatric literature) follows this guide as an appendix.

BACKGROUND: UNDERLYING CAUSES

According to recent statistics reported by the FBI, juveniles between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age account for 43 percent of all individuals arrested for arson offenses. Alarming as this percentage is, it excludes those juveniles who actually set fires but were arrested for non-arson offenses (such as vandalism or malicious mischief) because of local policy, or those who were diverted from the criminal justice system to some type of remedial program in lieu of arrest. Whatever the arrest policy with respect to firesetting may be in a particular community, the reality is that juvenile firesetting is a growing and increasingly serious property crime problem and life safety threat in communities throughout the nation.

Juvenile firesetting is a growing and increasingly serious problem.

A quick review of local arson incident and arrest statistics in any community, is likely to be insufficient in explaining why juvenile firesetting may be increasing. One reason for this is that investigative interest in motives is often reserved for adult arsonists (because more of those offenders are charged criminally) and motive-related information is vital to a successful prosecution. In contrast, juvenile firesetters are often channeled to treatment and other non-punitive programs, and investigators (fire or police) may be less interested in drawing out personal, family, or school problems behind the firesetting when this effort may not seem productive in view of competing demands on their time. At least for reporting purposes, *juvenile firesetters* have often been lumped together in their own separate category. Such action, combined with the lack of concern for gathering information relating to juvenile firesetting incidents, can impede the improvement of local understanding of firesetting motivations.

Despite this drawback, recent mental health research has shown that most firesetting youths fall into one of two categories: (1) those who are unaware of the consequences of their actions; and (2) those who fully understand the consequences of their acts and set fires because they want damage, injury, or death to result. Fire officials and mental health experts may often disagree on exactly where to draw the line regarding intent in an individual case.

However, distinguishing between firesetters in these categories helps to identify and develop treatment and other remedial options.

Included in the first category are juveniles who often have severe problems of mental retardation and psychiatric disorders, as well as youths who are driven by curiosity—such as children who are simply too young to appreciate the dangers involved in playing with matches. In the second category are youths who are motivated by the same factors as adult arsonists: revenge (including spite and jealousy), vandalism, malicious mischief, crime concealment, arson-for-profit, and intimidation. Because of the uncontrollable nature of fire, damage caused by youths in both categories can be catastrophic—both in terms of dollar losses and threats to life safety.

Curiosity and Retardation

Simple curiosity is seen as a factor in the level of fires set by juveniles.

Firesetters acting out of simple curiosity include very young children who, because of inexperience, are unaware of the hazards of fire; and other children who, due to a problem such as mental retardation, share the younger child's lack of awareness. Curiosity ranks as one of the most benign yet destructive factors behind juvenile firesetting. To address this particular problem, a number of fire prevention programs focus on education for young children. Individual programs range from well-structured coloring book exercises that feature lessons on the dangers of fire, to a more controversial program to exhaust curiosity by encouraging children to strike matches for a prolonged period of time until their curiosity becomes satisfied and they grow tired of this activity.

One specially designed educational program in Upper Arlington, Ohio, offers pre-schoolers a puppet show where the characters discuss the dangers involved in playing with matches. Firemen there also visit playgrounds during summer months to explain fire safety practices to the children. (Information on Upper Arlington fire prevention programs can be obtained by contacting officials listed in the resource directory at the end of this report.)

Emotional Disturbances

Today, most psychologists and psychiatrists intentionally avoid use of the word *pyromaniac*—an archaic term employed more as a catch-all category for those who set fires for no apparent reason other than to obtain sensual gratification. Much of this earlier emphasis can be traced to the influence of Sigmund Freud, who viewed firesetting behavior as an expression of release from sexual tension and frustration. More recently, mental health researchers and practitioners have found that firesetting behavior by the emotionally disturbed is too complicated a phenomenon to be reduced to a single cause in all instances. If there is a distinct trend that is evident in the contemporary mental health literature, it is that firesetting among juveniles stems from intense personal distress over a significant emotional loss, or severe anxiety over an

impending loss. The stressful events range from a prolonged absence of a parent or other loved one (such as through divorce or separation) to a severe setback in school advancement or personal achievement.

A review of mental health research on juvenile firesetting behavior suggests that the population of juveniles involved in *repeat* firesetting acts is quite small. However, the literature on juvenile firesetting *per se* is the most extensive of the mental health literature on emotional disturbances related to firesetting. One reason given for this disproportionate emphasis is that mental health experts have found that youths whose antisocial behavior includes firesetting are among the most emotionally disturbed of all their patients. In this regard, seriously disturbed juvenile firesetters may be seen as presenting a dangerous threat to their community, to their families, and to themselves, that far exceeds their numbers.

The scope and technical nature of the mental health literature on juvenile firesetting precludes its lengthy discussion here. Those interested in gaining a fairly quick but thorough overview of this vital research should find the monograph by R. G. Vreeland and M. B. Waller, *The Pyschology of Firesetting: A Review and Appraisal*, a most helpful reference. This publication, as well as the writings of many other experts whose work is cited within it, is listed in the *Resource Bibliography* at the end of this guide.

Mentally disturbed juvenile firesetters pose a threat which far exceeds their numbers.

In the way of a brief summary of the recent research, mental health experts have found that firesetting behavior among juveniles is often a reaction by otherwise normal individuals to extremely stressful situations in their lives. Other important findings of experts with respect to juvenile firesetters include the following:

- As they grow older, youthful firesetters tend to shift their targets from the home to more distant locations such as schools.
- Juvenile firesetting is usually associated with other delinquent behaviors such as theft and vandalism, and repeat firesetters exhibit other signs of delinquent behavior, such as chronic lying and cruelty to animals.
- Youthful firesetters usually come from families with a high incidence of either absent or weak fathers, although it is not uncommon for firesetters to resent mothers whom they perceive as being distant or unaffectionate. In a study of Seattle school arsons, researchers found the incidence of school fires to be noticeably higher in districts with a greater percentage of female heads of household.

Fire service personnel who have developed juvenile firesetter programs note that many of the above factors are reflected in their caseloads, but they place particular emphasis on two readily identifiable factors that run continually throughout their experience: first and most frequently, *absent fathers* (more often than mothers); and second, *learning problems* in school, often reflected in below-

average reading skills, sometimes serious enough to hold the child back one or more grades (and thus isolate the youth from his or her normal peer group). These issues are discussed in more detail below, in the section that deals with the resource ingredients of successful juvenile firesetter programs.

FIRESETTING MOTIVATIONS

In order to understand the requirements of adequate preventive and treatment programs, it is helpful to review the motives of juvenile firesetters. Motives underlying intentional firesetting behavior include vandalism; revenge, spite, and jealousy; crime concealment; and arson-for-profit and intimidation.

Vandalism

Community involvement can serve as a deterrent to arson.

There are no adequate nationwide statistics on the proportion of vandalism due to youthful firesetting, but most officials are convinced that it is very high. This would be a fair inference to make from the proportion of juveniles apprehended by public safety officials for vandalism firesetting acts. The two areas in which youthful involvement seems to be prominent are *school arson* (covered in a separate section later in this report) and the incendiary destruction of dilapidated *vacant buildings*. Community involvement programs where residents are on the lookout for trespassing behavior, and report it immediately to fire or police agencies, have brought arson reductions in many urban neighborhoods. Campaigns to board up vacant buildings in order to frustrate unwanted entry have also proven to be more effective than the initial cost of such programs sometimes indicates. With respect to the other major target of juvenile vandals—educational institutions—school security officials estimate that between 50 percent and 75 percent of all school fires are intentionally set by juveniles.

Revenge, Spite, and Jealousy

Juveniles set fires out of retribution just like angry and frustrated adult arsonists do, and apparently for the kinds of reasons—revenge, spite, and jealousy. Fires that stem from these motives are typically set by youths who have experienced some rejection or failure in close personal settings and do not know how to react constructively to this severe stress. In one study of this phenomenon, the "revenge-oriented" motive pattern was seen as a direct expression of aggression against adults whom the children perceived as "depriving" and "rejecting" in terms of expressing love and affection.

Crime Concealment

Some juveniles set fires in order to conceal or eliminate visible traces of other crimes that they have committed, such as burglary, larceny, homicide, and drug dealing. For example, investigators have noted that apparently random outbreaks of neighborhood arson fires—not explained by economic stress conditions or other

identifiable factors—may be the work of young, novice burglars who want to make sure that they leave behind no identifiable traces of evidence that might link them to their original crime. Where crime concealment has surfaced as a distinct arson motive problem, burglary and narcotics detectives work closely with arson investigators, and together have been more successful than if each specialist pursued this problem alone.

Arson-for-Profit and Intimidation

Fire investigators in such distant cities as Seattle and Boston have reported that juveniles have been hired as paid "torches" to burn buildings for insurance or extortion—frequently for as little as fifty dollars or even a six-pack of beer. Juveniles are attractive for this sordid work because of the very low wage that they command for setting fires, and the fact that they may be too young to have a prior arrest record—and thus be known to police or fire departments. Youth gangs have also been known to demand tribute in the form of money, goods, or services in return for providing "protection." Failure to pay or deliver the extortionate tribute on time can bring either small warning fires or the real thing. Wielded in this way as a weapon of fear, arson has become another tool in the seizure and control of "turf" by juvenile gangs.

Arson investigators working in tandem with other crime officials show a greater level of success in solving arson-related crimes.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

The challenge to fire service, police, school, mental health, and other professionals is the early and accurate identification of problem youths who engage in firesetting, isolating the underlying cause or motivation behind their behavior, and involving them in a meaningful counseling, treatment, or other program designed to address their underlying problem. In view of the severe resource limitations confronting many agencies today, this may be easier said than done. However, the important point to remember is that in order to help ensure the success of a juvenile firesetter program, it is essential to perform as early as possible, a *professional diagnosis* of each child's problem. Unless the diagnostic function is handled in a professional manner, the child may be placed in a treatment mode that is entirely unsuited to his or her underlying problem. This goes for youths who may be scheduled to receive too little help, as well as those at the other extreme who may be unnecessarily institutionalized. Because of inadequate diagnosis, the serious firesetting behavior may continue and even grow worse.

An early and accurate diagnosis is essential to treatment of juvenile firesetters.

Usually, it is recommended that the diagnostic function be performed, if at all possible, by a mental health professional (psychiatrist or psychologist). However, this may be costly for a fire service agency to arrange—especially in smaller communities. To address both the diagnostic and treatment issues in a manner consistent with local resources, a number of local agencies have developed innovative and highly successful juvenile firesetter programs. In these both diagnostic and treatment functions are performed, with some

programs using fire service personnel (specially trained) to handle both specialties and others relying upon fire service personnel to make referrals to professional mental health experts. The following discussion highlights major attributes of those programs and the key factors that other agencies should consider when seeking to replicate these programs.

Five noteworthy juvenile firesetter counseling programs were reviewed for inclusion in this report. The programs are located in San Francisco, California; Dallas, Texas; Los Angeles County, California; Mesa, Arizona; and Prince Georges County, Maryland. Three of the five programs (Prince Georges County and Mesa, Arizona are the exceptions) offer in-house counseling provided by fire service personnel. Most of these programs have been initiated in the past ten years, and most are limited to dealing exclusively with the juvenile firesetters, although the San Francisco and Dallas efforts also address the needs of the parents (if they are willing to participate, and they usually are).

One method of treating juvenile firesetters involves determining their level of "firesetting risk."

The Los Angeles County program developed from a workshop sponsored by the California Psychological Association, which convened a special proceeding of firefighters and psychologists in 1975 for this purpose. The workshop later grew into the Fire Service and Arson Prevention Committee of that statewide association, and committee members now include both fire service personnel and psychologists. The Los Angeles County program became the pilot project of that association, and following successful results there the effort has been replicated in other departments throughout the state. The effort also resulted in the preparation of a diagnostic and interview instrument that counselors can use in order to gauge the extent of a juvenile's firesetting problem. Information on obtaining *Interviewing and Counseling Juvenile Firesetters*, which was later published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is included in the *Resource Bibliography* that follows this discussion.

The San Franciso Fire Department juvenile firesetter program was initiated in 1979, and because of its recent origin it has benefitted from the successes and problems that programs in other cities learned along the way. Known as the "Firehawks" program, the San Francisco effort started as the personal project of Fire Chief Andrew Casper. The Chief brought in a special projects coordinator, who convened a working group of firefighters and psychologists, as well as community leaders. The San Francisco program employed many of the diagnostic techniques used in other programs, with a special focus on determining the degree of firesetting risk presented by each youth in the program. According to the determination of risk (low, moderate, or high) each child is assigned to a particular treatment mode based on that degree of risk For *low risk* youth—primarily those whose firesetting is a product of curiosity—a special educational approach is utilized that presents to the youth the serious consequences of fire. For *moderate*

risk youth, most of whom come from homes with absent or inattentive fathers, department counselors work to build meaningful relationships with the youths. This treatment mode is known simply as a *Companion Program*, and the firefighter-counselors who volunteer to participate in this program spend their recreational time with the youths. The desired time commitment involves interaction for eight to ten hours per month for a period of one year. For *high risk* youth, who are placed in this category because of severe emotional problems, the department has established a network whereby the youths are referred to mental health professionals in the community.

Youths involved in firesetter counseling programs are normally referred to the fire department for counseling either by their parents or by an arson investigator. Most of the counselors who staff the in-house programs are firefighters (not arson investigators) who have received specialized training in counseling from other firefighter-counselors or from mental health consultants hired by their departments to perform this specific function. When developing firefighter based counseling programs, it is important to note some issues that surfaced as problems in the pilot localities. First, firefighter-counselors who are transferred from station to station may lose valuable contact with their counselee's in larger communities; and second, firefighters assigned to swing and other odd-hour shifts may be unavailable during the times that their counselees need them.

Fire departments can play a major role in the treatment of juvenile firesetters.

There have been many positive results from the San Francisco program—not the least of which is its one-hundred percent success (non-recidivism) rate among firesetting youths involved. Others include the development of a documentary film on juvenile firesetting and the creation of a national public service organization, the National Firehawk Foundation, to develop local chapters on counseling juvenile firesetters across the country. Information on both the San Francisco program and the National Firehawk Foundation is contained in the *Resource Bibliography*.

Three of the departments (San Francisco, Dallas, and Upper Arlington) have developed interview manuals for their counselors to follow. The guidelines cover methods to determine the nature and extent of each youth's firesetting problem (the diagnostic function) as well as methods to help the youth solve his or her underlying problem with handling stress, anger, schoolwork, or other problems that appear to lead to or actually trigger the firesetting incidents. These departmental interview guides are not now available commercially, but may be obtained by contacting the sources listed in the *Resource Bibliography*.

The juvenile firesetter programs endeavor to select a level of counseling involvement and length of interaction that are geared to the severity of each child's problem. In most of the programs the counseling lasts a maximum of four weeks, although the San Fran-

cisco program encourages prolonged (if less intensive) interaction with counselors in order to guard against any possible recidivism, and the Dallas program offers a six-month program for youths whose problems are found to be severe. At the other extreme, Dallas also offers a two-session, one-week program for less troubled youths and specifically those whose firesetting stems from curiosity. Significantly, all of the programs refer children with serious emotional problems to a mental health agency or professional. In most of the departments whose personnel follow interview manuals, counselors are provided with a battery of specially chosen questions in order to help them assess whether the child may be so emotionally disturbed that professional mental health assistance is necessary. In no program are the counselors encouraged to hold on to a firesetting youth whose behavior stems from a serious emotional disturbance.

Intensive involvement by counselors is viewed as a workable and cost-effective means of treating juvenile firesetters.

The self-reported results of these programs are impressive, especially when contrasted to outcomes from other treatment and special intervention programs for non-firesetting delinquent youths. Firesetter counseling *success rates* are expressed in terms of youths who do not commit further acts of firesetting (that is, non-recidivism) and range from ninety to one hundred percent. While no formal evaluations of firesetter counselor programs have been performed, it does seem convincing on the basis of available information that intensive involvement by counselors—acting essentially as paraprofessional mental health workers—is a workable and cost-effective method of treatment. Firesetting youths whose problems are associated with learning disabilities receive tutoring services from counselors, and other youths whose problems relate to absent or uninvolved parents (usually fathers) receive a form of "Big Brother" companionship and counseling from fire service personnel.

SCHOOL-BASED ARSON

$600 million is reported to be lost on school-based fires annually.

School centered arson is reported to be increasing—sometimes drastically—in all types of communities throughout the country. A recent report on school violence notes that there are approximately 2000 fires in schools nationwide each month. Authorities estimate that between fifty and seventy percent of these are intentionally set by students. Arson and other forms of school vandalism reportedly cost over $600 million annually—an amount roughly equal to all yearly expenditures on textbooks. It is also important to note that an alarming number of incendiary school fires completely destroy the institutions, and it is not unusual for a school arson to cause at least $1 million in damage.

Fire service and mental health experts who have studied the school arson phenomenon find that youths involved in this activity have problems similar to those who set home-based fires. The difference between home or school targets chosen appears to be a function of who or what the firesetting youth perceives to be the

cause of intense personal distress. Youths who set school fires tend to have been held back (frequently because of a reading problem) or disciplined. Because school-centered firesetting grows out of problems that are similar to those faced by home-based firesetters, the remedy is very much the same.

Many firesetting youths experiment with small fires at school—wastebaskets, trash cans, washroom towels—before moving on to larger and more dangerous ones. These smaller, often "warning" fires do relatively little damage, and it is usually difficult for school authorities to track down the firesetter. Custodial personnel frequently choose not to report such fires, or the incidents are recorded as acts of minor vandalism in order to avoid a fire or police response that school officials might regard as unwelcome and embarrassing. Consequently, many warning fires that cause little damage are not identified as such, and the firesetting youth characteristically moves on to more destructive and perhaps deadly acts of incendiarism. However, youths who are identified early as having firesetting problems and are placed in effective counseling or other treatment programs, frequently discontinue this activity altogether. The Seattle study mentioned earlier noted that two schools that added mental health counselors to their staffs soon experienced a decline in their arson rates.

Small "warning fires" are usually a prelude to more serious fires.

In many areas, youths manage to fast acquire degrees of experience and sophistication in firesetting. In so doing, they may avoid both early detection of their antisocial activities and placement in counseling or other types of programs until it is too late. Unfortunately, not every jurisdiction can afford to include mental health counselors on school staffs, and concerned officials in these localities need preventive programs that will deter firesetting youths who may not have been identified as such. Since many school-based arsons are set after school hours—at night and during weekends—officials have resorted to the use of technological devices to prevent unauthorized intrusion, and, where that somehow fails, to provide early notification to fire departments of incendiary activity. This general approach is known as "target hardening," and it has been used successfully throughout the country in a variety of residential and commercial burglary prevention programs. With respect to arson prevention, target hardening involves the installation of burglar alarms that are connected to police departments, and fire alarms that remain connected when school is not in session.

"Target hardening" is a viable aid to reducing the level of school-based fires.

In one very instructive example, the New York City school system was plagued by a steep and costly rise in school arsons. Officials there implemented a multi-faceted program, which included upgrading their entire intrusion alarm system. As a result, both unlawful entries and intentionally set fires decreased dramatically—in many problem schools by as much as one hundred percent in the first year! Reductions in arson in most participating schools averaged at least fifty percent. The New York City program included

these basic features:

- Creation of a central communications station, open twenty-four hours per day, into which are channeled fire and burglar alarm notifications.
- Installation of communication devices in schools that are activated upon unlawful entry, and which permit personnel staffing the central communications station to overhear activity in the school in question.
- Utilization of relatively low cost digital communications equipment that relies upon existing telephone lines to connect the alarms and listening devices to the central communications station.
- Installation of smoke detectors in remote school building areas, to augment the alarms and listening devices.

In communities that do not choose to invest the sums necessary to implement a system as comprehensive as New York's, and which may be affected only occasionally by school arsons, some less costly but nevertheless effective alternatives are available. First, since most school burglar and fire alarms are disconnected after school hours, for a marginal sum those devices can remain activated during evenings and weekends. Second, school burglar and fire alarms can be connected to police and fire stations in order to facilitate a rapid response when an intrusion or fire occurs.

Additional preventive steps have been suggested by Peter Blauvelt, the Director of Security for the Prince Georges County, Maryland, Board of Education:

- Request local fire departments to conduct a building survey with recommendations on the storage of flammable materials in schools.
- Require all school storage areas to be secured at all times.
- Conduct fire prevention instructional proceedings for school staff and custodial personnel.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of combustible materials in bathrooms—a common learning area for school arsonists. For example, air blowing hand driers reduce the need for combustible paper towels.
- Pay special attention to the storage and frequent inventory of chemicals in science laboratories.
- Install smoke or fire detectors in areas where combustible materials are stored.
- Assign staff persons to check all storage areas—interior and exterior—at the end of the school day.
- Insist that all school fires, no matter how minor, be reported to the fire department. Let the professional fire investigator determine whether a fire was accidental or intentionally set.

The above factors take on added importance when we look at data on school arsons. Severe fires seem to occur more frequently in suburban and rural communities whose fire departments may

require a longer response time to reach the fire scene. Because of this factor, considerably more fire (or vandalism) damage occurs than if activated alarm systems provided immediate notification of the occurrence to public safety officials. Suburban, rural, and small-town school boards may want to consider these points when weighing the alternative costs of school fire and vandalism prevention modes.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

Firesetter Counseling Programs

Los Angeles County, California

- Captain Joseph Day
  Los Angeles County Fire Department
  P.O. Box 3009
  Los Angeles, California 90051

Upper Arlington, Ohio

- Chief John Haney
  Upper Arlington Fire Division
  3600 Tremont Road
  Upper Arlington, Ohio 43221

San Francisco, California

- Ms. Pamela McLaughlin
  President, National Firehawk Foundation
  1 Sutter Street, Suite 300
  San Francisco, California 94104

Dallas, Texas

- Chief Bernard McKenzie
  Youth Services Program
  Dallas Fire Department
  2014 Main Street
  Dallas, Texas 75201

Mental Health Resources

- Dr. Eugene Bumpass
  Division of Child Psychiatry
  University of Texas
  Health Science Center
  Arlington, Texas 76019
- Dr. Donald Gair
  Gaebler Clinic
  Metropolitan Hospital
  475 Trapelo Road
  Waltham, Massachusetts 02254

- Dr. Kenneth Fineman
  Neuropsychiatric Treatment Center
  17822 Beach Boulevard
  Huntington Beach, California 92647

School-Based Arson

- Mr. Peter Blauvelt
  Director of School Security
  Prince Georges County Board of Education
  507 Largo Road
  Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772
- Dr. Robert Rubel
  Brookfield Educational
  Route 2, Box 295
  San Marcos, Texas 78666
- Mr. Len Sabatino
  Director of School Security
  New York City Board of Education
  2811 Queens Plaza North
  Queens, New York 11101
- Dr. Robert Rubel
  Brookfield Educational
  Route 2, Box 295
  San Marcos, Texas 78666

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Peter D. Blauvelt, *Effective Strategies for School Security*, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091, 1981.

Point-by-point approach to improving school security procedures, including those designed to prevent and deter school arsons.

Thomas R. Collingwood, "An HRD Approach to Police Diversion for Juvenile Offenders," *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, April 1976, pp. 435-437.

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